

Testimony Submitted to the Appropriations Committee:

March 6, 2015

Senator Bye, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Julie Erickson and I am the Senior VP at CCARC, Inc. located in New Britain. CCARC is a non-profit agency that supports approximately 200 individuals with developmental disabilities. CCARC is committed to providing quality services to enhance individuals' lives, promote and develop their abilities and provide opportunities for community involvement. We achieve these objectives through Day and Residential Services, Recreational Programs and Self Advocacy.

I would like to share my concerns with H.B. 6824, An Act Concerning The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June Thirtieth 2017, And Making Appropriations Therefor And Other Provisions Related To Revenue. In particular, I wanted to express my sincere concerns to the funding reductions in the **Department of Developmental Services**. I have seen many individuals flourish when given the opportunity to work and/or live in their communities alongside the rest of us. In my 34 years of employment with CCARC, Inc. I have never been as fearful as I am now that many of these individuals and their families will lose or never have these opportunities because of the decimation to the system caused by the Governor's proposed cuts.

As I listened to Governor Malloy's budget address I noticed that the nonprofit sector was never mentioned; that vital provider of essential services that employs 12% of the state total workforce. I never heard mention of the role we play as "partners" with the state in providing critical human services. There wasn't a mention of how crucial we are in the cultural and economic revitalization of our communities. Never once was there recognition of how effective and efficient we are. Instead our budgets were slashed at every turn. The one exception is the availability of bond money for capital improvements.

Community providers, like CCARC, Inc. are critical partners to the state of Connecticut, providing high quality health and human services to more than 500,000 people each year. We save lives, while being less costly than state-provided services, yet Connecticut has struggled to make community-based services a budgeting or policy priority. Medicaid reimbursement rates do not cover the cost of care, leaving providers to operate at a loss for nearly every service delivered. Ever-increasing costs and demand for services, combined with repeated budget cuts, have put the provision of critical services at risk.

The proposed cuts, coupled with four rounds of rescissions/budget modification dating back to late 2012, have put enormous pressure onto an already severely depleted system. The reality is that nonprofit providers have been pushed to our breaking point due to the lack of investment over the past two decades. Chronic underfunding has already forced many nonprofits to close, compete against one another for scarce resources, layoff employees, reduce benefit packages; altogether creating a win or lose system that weakens the entire nonprofit sector and threatens its sustainability.

As members of the Appropriations Committee work toward creating your 'Recommended Budget' for SFY16 and 17, I urge you to restore these harmful cuts to ensure critical programs and services are

available to the residents who have developmental disabilities in Connecticut. I'd also like to respectfully remind you that investing in the nonprofit sector will improve service delivery, increase economic activity, and save taxpayer money; a "win-win" for policymakers working to strengthen the economy, the nonprofit workforce trying to make ends meet, and most importantly, the clients and their families who count-on efficient, cost-effective, and high-quality services in our communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions, or for additional information.

Julie Erickson
Senior VP
CCARC, Inc.
950 Slater Road
New Britain, CT 06053
860-229-6665
jerickson@ccarc.com